

W. C. C. W. C. C.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ECLECTIC MEDICAL SOCIETY

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK,

AT ITS SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING IN JUNE, 1869,

BY

ALEXANDER WILDER,

President of the Society



ALBANY, N. Y.:

WELD, PARSONS AND COMPANY, PRINTERS

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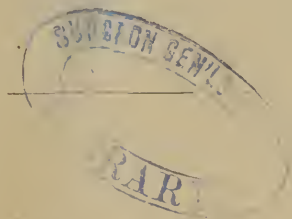
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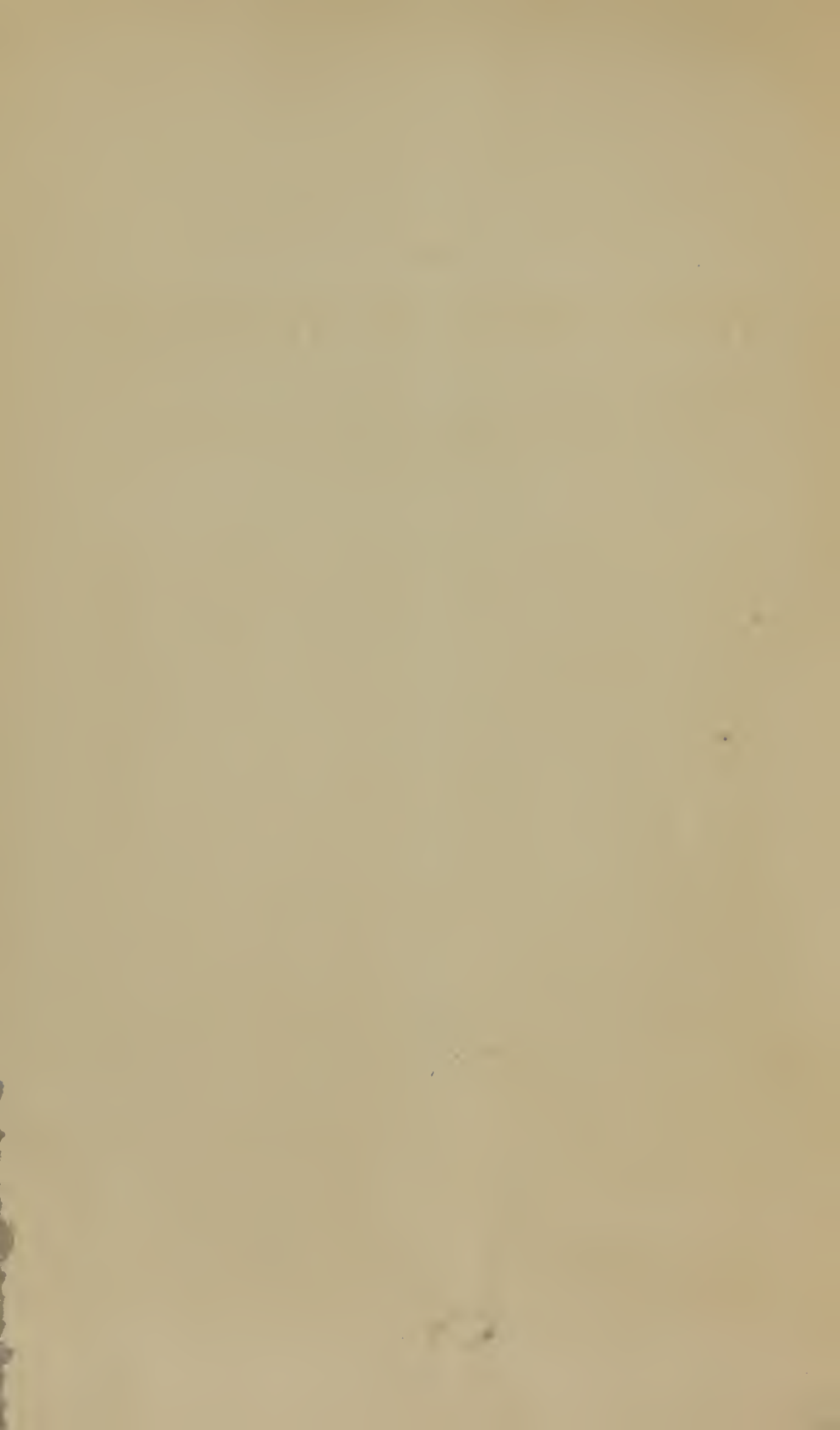
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THE NEW SCHOOL OF MEDICINE:

ITS FIELD OF OPERATION—ITS CATHOLICITY, PROGRESS AND DIS-
COVERIES—PLEA FOR THOROUGH MEDICAL EDUCATION
THE FUTURE, ETC., ETC.

We have convened in semi-annual session, according to usage, to exchange the mutual greeting, to renew our former associations, and to take note of the progress which has been making in medical knowledge. Such assemblings are always useful. They burnish the chain of friendship and strengthen the bonds of fellowship which should always exist between the members of a common profession. The present occasion, I trust, will be, in no respect, an exception to that rule. It would be hostile to the genius of science, it would be running counter to the liberalizing tendencies of the present century, for our sessions to be spent in displays of jealousy, envy or recrimination. Medicine is a catholic science; and they who are really proficient in it are above the employment of the slang vocabulary to express their sentiments toward their fellows, however great may be the differences of belief. Medicine is liberal in its influence; and they who are physicians in spirit, as well as by virtue of a conferred degree, are free and liberal in their dealings, and have neither need nor disposition to cramp and enslave their fellows by an arbitrary code of ethics, the tendency of which is to create a professional monopoly, and to set aside the Golden Rule.

Standing on this platform, so broad as to afford room for every generous, high-minded person who is devoted to medical science, and comprehensive enough to include every fact, every truth, every idea which is capable of use to ourselves, our profession and our fellowmen, we invite to our side every one with integrity, moral courage and proper self-respect enough to entitle him to a place here. We ask not where such a one was educated; whose diploma confers the rank;

what favorite modes of practice and thought may characterize him; but whether he is honorably persisting in worthy purpose, loving truth for truth's own sake, and modestly but reverently and stubbornly prosecuting the course which honest conviction marks out for his steps. This is the only way to exemplify a genuine manhood, to become and be a good physician, to honor the healing profession; and, I add, this is Medical Eclecticism.

I am not fond, however, of denominational distinctions. I only accept the title of "Eclectic" as a necessity created by circumstances. I would gladly even lay aside the appellation of "Doctor" and walk among men, untitled, purely and simply as one of themselves, peer to every one and according no superior rank or authority to any, but acknowledging to each the same parity of right which I demand for myself. I would prefer to be known for the utility and service which indicated me rather than for any degree or factitious rank with which any man or institution can invest me. But many think otherwise, and I see no better way for the present than to conform externally to the rule, and accept such matters substantially as I find them—to consent to be entitled a doctor, and to be distinguished as a member of the New School of Medicine. The thing, too, has its compensations; we have no traditions to enslave our intellect, no Proenstean code of ethics to destroy our manhood, no servile or selfish usages to cramp our movements and degrade us to ourselves.

The name of Eclectic is suggestive of catholicity, of free thought, and noble action. In the old philosophy it was applied to those choice spirits who were careful to gather up all that was good, wholesome and true in the old learning, while they were reverently bold to push their own investigations in every direction into every new field of thought. I honor Plotinus, Iamblichus, Proclus, Longinus, Synesius, and especially that divine woman, Hypatia, who taught wisdom at the Museum at Alexandria, and sealed her doctrines, on the pavement of a Christian church, with her blood. The reaction of that crime extended all through the centuries; and now calm-browed, deep-thinking men receive with veneration the same doctrines which old iconoclasm vainly sought to destroy, and superficial reasoning endeavored to smother with contempt. The free thought which church and State alike attempted to crush, erecting inquisitions, pillories, scaffolds, racks, and engines of fearful torture, to make of it an end, now, like the stone of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, has become a mountain, and is filling the earth. Such is the

progress of Eclectic Philosophy. It has survived derision as well as persecution, and is now the strongest force at work in the world of thought, operating like the alcahest in dissolving all things, like the famed philosopher's stone in transmuting all baser elements into gold, and like the *elixir vite* in imparting a fuller, purer, truer life.

I trust that the Eclectic School of Medicine will prosecute a career equally noble, lofty and beneficial. It has the world for its field, and all mankind for its neophytes. The vital forces of all living things are constantly engaged in elaborating for it a proper assortment of health-restoring agents. What is required is to push inquiry boldly to find them out. The laws of life are the laws by which the whole universe is governed; the wise man, the sagacious physician, will be always on the vigil to ascertain and apply them. The "mind diseased," the physical structure racked with pain and anguish, alike demand care and attention. The knowledge which is in the books should be mastered with earnest anxiety; and the knowledge which is not in the books should be studied with greater earnestness and inquisitive curiosity. The physician should be able to treat the maladies of the mind as well as to prescribe for the ailments of the body; and to distinguish between the philosophical and the fanciful. To do this, it is necessary to study human nature upon the psychological side; as the bard Taliesin expresses it, to

"know with certainty
What are the properties of the soul;
Of what form are its members;
What region is its abode;
By what breath, what inflowing life
It is sustained."

No knowledge, therefore, should be considered too abstruse or sacred, too commonplace or trivial, to be acquired and cherished. We are not too good or pure to know anything, however low or humble; nor is anything within the scope of our intellect to be regarded as too holy to be explored and investigated. But too much care cannot be had of the spirit and temper with which we proceed. Knowledge has equal value wherever it is found, whether in a monumental stone, in a carving, or in the vaticinations of a seer, or the pages of a Testament. There is little occasion for us to be eager to tear down, and we need not be emulous to build up. It behooves us to be wisely eclectic, gathering carefully the good that may come within the fold of our net, and casting away the residue. The

realms of History, Legend and Fable invite our search. The human heart has had too many utterances to warrant the belief that by silencing them all evil may be swept from the world. Whatever men in any age have reverently believed, has thereby a claim to our respect; and for the sake of knowledge we may sit willingly at the feet of teachers in every school.

Regarding psychological study to be as important to the physician as physiological, pathological, or indeed any other, we cannot refrain from reiterating this conviction.

Now, it may do for our adversaries to earn by their old-time persistence in venesection the appropriate nickname of "leech," and by the employment of quicksilver and its compounds, the other epithet of "quack." A nobler, broader field is open to the Eclectic. He is not circumscribed, like his homœopathic brother, by an exclusive theory of *similia similibus curantur*; well enough, perhaps, if it is true, but most unlucky for him who so teaches if future demonstration show it not to be the whole truth. If for the Eclectic there is a limit, it is only that of life — vitality itself, and his restricted finite capacity. We say the limit of vitality itself, because we entertain the popular conviction, for which it may not be easy to account, that only substances and agents which are or have been organized, which have been permeated with life or a vital aura, should be employed as remedies. Perhaps our knowledge is too incomplete to enable us to avoid the whole kingdom of mineral death; and it is expedient to employ the salts and compounds of zinc, iron, sodium, potassium, and the non-metallic bodies. Yet we feel called upon, in this very matter, to adopt the words of Paul before the court of Areopagus: "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." For the present we must do as well as we are able; but nevertheless, there is "a more excellent way."

It seems, therefore, to be the mission and apostleship of the New School of Medicine to go before, and open the way for all to follow. To be sure, in this way, the pioneers are made subject to a world of reproach. Our old school friends, and even a few homœopaths, take down their slang dictionary, and, after conning it awhile, belch out with a torrent of nicknames and invectives, such as "quack," "empiric," "charlatan," "mountebank," "humbug," "impostor," "advertising quack," etc. You have all read in John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" of Giant Pope, who had become old, impotent, toothless and rheumatic, so that he could not hurt anybody; who

used to make it his vocation to sit a little way outside of his cave, near the strait and narrow path, and rail, denounce and execrate the pious pilgrims as they went on their way to the heavenly city. That is the way, the spirit and the logie with which some persons now rail at and denounce Eclecties. They make codes of ethics, sometimes, a sort of Lilliputian cordage for the Gullivers; and then see how the Gardners and the Carnoehans boldly and manfully disregard them. And how old Giant Pope does howl; he is so impotent.

But let us be careful how we denounce in return. Let us be mindful of the tender father when he saw his little child feeding bread and milk to a poisonous snake. The parent drew near with a club to despatch the reptile, but hesitated to give the blow, lest missing the snake he should smite the child. If we, in retaliation for the unjust abuse which we receive from the narrow, the vain and the ignorant, seek to return evil for evil and railing for railing, we shall be prone to do injury to those who deserve it not. We can better afford to 'bide our time. In due season we shall reap if we faint not. They who now scoff at us as ignorant, irregular and empiries, will yet remain to pray. "In those days," says the prophet, "ten men, out of all the languages of the nations, shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, and will say, 'We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" We shall yet, in a minor sense, witness the stone which the builders rejected, that the same has become the head of the corner; and we can afford to await the *denouement*; "whoso shall fall upon that stone the same shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder."

At the present time the Eclectic practice is classified as "irregular." Its practitioners, however learned, skillful or accomplished, are ostracised. They are eligible nowhere to honorable official appointments. The endeavor has been persistently made to class them with Pariahs outside of the privileged circle.

Who would suppose that a school of medical practice so vilified was actively at work and completely revolutionizing the entire *Materia Medica* of Allopathists and Homœopathists? Yet this is the case at this very moment. Our old school neighbors are daily doling out to their patients our preparations of mandrake, cohosh, black root, queen's root, yam, stone root, golden seal, blood root, Indian poke, skull cap, lobelia, and a hundred others. They are forgetting how

to bleed—a scientific method, by the way, of killing a patient to save his life. They nowadays seldom make discoveries of their own, they are so busy at appropriating the new remedies of the Eclectics. There is one peculiarity about it; in this country no old school physician gives due credit when he adopts an Eclectic remedy; but in Europe, Eclectics and their remedies receive honorable mention.

I am gratified to be able to inform the Society that in this State we have achieved creditable position. In 1865 the Eclectic State Medical Society obtained its charter, amidst a struggle of parliamentary opposition which again and again threatened utter defeat. All honor to Senators Dutcher and Allaben, to Speaker Hoskins and Assemblymen Henry B. Lord, Mark D. Wilber and Edmund L. Pitts; their good offices assured success; we have since improved our status, till at the session of the Legislature of 1869, more enthusiasm, more curiosity, more interest was displayed to know and hear the Eclectics than was occasioned by the assembling of both the Old School and the Homœopathic State Medical Societies.

It would not be candid for me to pass by without proper acknowledgment the courtesies displayed at the last session by members of the Homœopathic State Society. I was invited to its sessions, and addressed those who were in attendance. At the supper given by a distinguished physician to the Society, I was present and seated at the side of Doctor Watson, the learned and gentlemanly President. Cordiality was apparent on every hand. In private conversation, members were ready at all times to tell me how their practice, and indeed the entire Homœopathic Materia Medica, had been benefited by the remedies adopted from the Eclectics. There was abundant evidence of a catholic spirit abroad among our Homœopathic associates, which should not fail to inspire a generous reciprocity. What if the Eclectics, so ingenious and successful in inventing new remedies, and the Homœopathists in extending their efficiency by provings, should be fellow-laborers in one field? Who would regret the mutual enlightenment from such associations, each viewing the same truth from a different point of observation? The world moves, whatever the Holy Inquisition and the 10th chapter of Joshua may say; and we are all moving forward with it. I am willing, for one, to reciprocate the friendly disposition which was manifested to me at Albany, to go fraternally hand in hand with our liberal and progressive Homœopathic brethren, never harboring a regret if some future illumination should lead us to upset the wall of partition, and become "sheep of one fold and one shepherd."

Our Medical College also should receive consideration. Its prosperity is essential to the prosperity of the Eclectic School of Medicine. Since it was incorporated in 1865 there have been five full courses of instruction given, sufficiently thorough to entitle the institution to the confidence of the profession. The trustees and professors have been compelled to struggle through a sea of pecuniary embarrassment, receiving many kind words from Massachusetts, Canada and elsewhere, but unfortunately much less of that other species of kindness which is material and sensible. The College has kept up with the school and the age. In the surgical department, the successful treatment of cancer and other maladies, which have been often declared incurable, has been faithfully taught; the chair of Eclectic pharmacy, now vital to the very existence of our School of Medicine, is well filled; and the professors occupying the other chairs will compare very favorably with those in the other medical colleges. Grati-fying testimony is given of the proficiency of the graduates and other students. An equivalent has been rendered to every one.

While science is assiduously cultivated, principle has been persistently maintained. Our Eclecticism has not been destitute of wisdom, or disregarding of personal or social right. From the first, we have practicably acknowledged the equal right of every human being to learn and to know that which pertained to the individual welfare. The degree of this College has been conferred upon ten women as well as upon persons of the other sex. This is not liberality, it is not courtesy even, but simple justice. We are not anxious to blazon the matter abroad; but let those who speak of us be ready to proclaim that from the earliest period in its history, our Eclectic College and the Eclectic School of Medicine have made no more distinction between one person and another, than did God himself when he dispensed the bounties of the universe equally to his creatures. Where distinctions exist, and an antipathy is indulged to the instruction of women in medical and surgical knowledge, there the spirit of Eclecticism is not supreme. Those who share our common humanity, our households and our social life are welcome to participate with us in the acquiring of useful knowledge, and in bearing the labors and responsibilities incident to our mundane life. Whatever vocation any person is fit to pursue, is a right which no true Eclectic, no true man will ever venture to gainsay. We are willing to rest the question there, and abide the decision of a candid public. It is our purpose

to advance; not emulous to make innovations but eagerly desirous to ascertain and obey the truth.

The complaint that the labor of women is ill-remunerated is answered by the assertion that it is unskilled and therefore must be cheap. If female servants were educated they would secure higher wages. This thing is true in every vocation. When we open our higher schools to women, we do our best to obviate the complaint.

We appeal to this society to take active measures in behalf of the college. Its success and prosperity are essential to the future well being of Eclectic Medicine in the State of New York. We cannot cope successfully with the other Schools of Medicine, except by occupying the field with well-educated and skillful physicians. We shall never invade the ground now occupied by our rivals, except we are their superiors. Untaught, narrow-minded practitioners, and a literature little above such men, will precipitate Eclectic Medicine into contempt. Their influence is to make us deserve the opprobrious epithets which adversaries love to employ. By maintaining a good institution of our own, and insisting on thorough instruction for our students, by furnishing large classes, we shall be able to assert and hold our superiority. The door is open, the way is plain; if we are wise we will walk in it.

This appeal would be incomplete if I did not mention the *Eclectic Medical Review*, now about to begin its fifth volume. Under its accomplished editors, Doctors Newton and Morrow, it has attained excellence as a literary production, a repository of scientific material, and an exponent of Eclectic Medicine, nowhere surpassed in this country; and the best physicians of Europe cordially acknowledged its merits. This volume is to have also the editorial services of Doctor J. M. F. Browne, our worthy Professor of Physiology, whose scientific and literary attainments are an honor to our School of Medicine; and, with him and Dr. Morrow, one of the most promising physicians in this State, there is every assurance that the *Review* will be, in point of excellence, all that its friends can hope or require. Let it then have a generous pecuniary support and a circulation worthy of its reputation.

These are the New Times. We are, as a people—I had almost said as a race—letting go of the traditions of the previous centuries. Our nation carried on four years of civil war—war more vast in its dimensions than any that had ever been witnessed in any country, and has emerged from it with new views of political action, of the

functions of government, and, what is better, of the personal rights of men. It was no mere war of conquest, but a Revolution so momentous, that, to use the figurative language of the apostle, it shook, "not the earth only, but also heaven." And, to pursue his logic, the shaking signified the removing of the things that were shaken, that those which were not shaken might remain. Our New England and New York, Pennsylvania and the Great Northwest have remained, with their institutions, their free thought, free speech and free education; and there they will remain till the Aryan race and our branch of it shall go forth no more "conquering and to conquer."

Slavery, social degradation, universal ignorance and lawlessness, by this Revolution, have been doomed; and all that we are waiting for is for the dead past to bury its dead.

England, where Revolution is becoming "familiar as a household word," has found it necessary to extend her suffrage. Her population are fast learning that there is no right divine in a king, no special sanctity in a nobleman. A disestablished church will soon be the next trophy of the heavenward progress of her people. We let the poet speak the rest:

"But when thy suffering millions feel
A foe in thee alone,
Nor throne, nor lords, nor martial power
Can stand the onset of that hour."

The Scandinavian North, our parent land, has proceeded, step by step, to disincumber itself of the feudal aristocracy; and civil and religious freedom are enjoyed from the Baltic to the Pole.

Germany is ceasing to be Austrian, and accepting instead the dynasty of the Bo-Russian. It is a long step in advance, to be measured by the superiority of the genius of Bismarck to that of Metternich. But Austria is rivaling all Europe in liberalism.

France, oscillating between republicanism and despotism, has yet the problem to determine whether the Gallic races are capable of sustaining free institutions. But freedom is the dream of her thinking men, and may yet become a day vision.

Italy, consolidating around the kingdom of Sardinia, like Germany around Prussia, has made unexampled strides toward liberty, religious freedom and universal popular instruction.

Spain, once the pioneer of all that was bold, aggressive and civilizing, but afterward the embodiment of the vice, the bigotry, the degradation and imbecility to which European middle-age civiliza-

tion naturally tended, has awoke once more to a consciousness of the movements going on among the nations. She has done what France did twenty years before—sent away her Bourbons; and now her Castlebar, trumpet-tongued, calls upon her to complete her regeneration by disenthraling herself from the domination of her priests. She may hesitate—she probably will; but the words have been spoken, and their echo will reverberate from province to province, and from mountain to mountain, till there can be no rest, no pacification, except by the emancipation of the people.

In the nineteenth century a nation is born in a day.

With such general progress we cannot stand still. Our profession cannot long hold back from receiving the same impetus. Our Washingtons and our Cavours are to perish no more beneath the lancet of the physician. Our Harrisons and our Taylors are to enjoy immunity from premature death from barbarous medical treatment. A Code of Medical Ethics, born of the Dark Ages, conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, will not be permitted to fetter the limbs of intelligent, earnest men. As the misquoted tenth chapter of Joshua did not silence Galileo, so now, a rule as secret, cruel and wicked as ever was the Spanish Inquisition, will not be allowed to hold back medical progress; and a generous public will scorn the endeavor to have an *auto da fe* for the immolation of Carnochans, Gardners and other giants who have burst the chrysalid investments of Old Physic. The ablest medical men of Europe are even now responding to the requirements of the times; and we may fairly expect that here in the United States, where the prophets were stoned and persecuted, the posterity of those who did those deeds will soon hasten to erect for them monuments and sepulchres.

The Promised Land of professional supremacy is ours by birth-right. Formidable men may now hold it, but they are not invincible. They are adapting their strategy to the exigency. When the great Tippoo Sahib fell before the superior weapons of the English, he left this legacy of advice—"Learn the military knowledge of the enemy, and then conquer him with his own arts and weapons." Our adversaries seem to have adopted that rule. We now daily witness men who have no gentler word or epithet for us than "quack" or "empiric," procuring and using the hundreds of new agents which our pharmacutists have discovered and introduced; and, after these men have learned the efficacy and relative harmlessness of the new medicines, they vauntingly tell us that they are as much Eclectic as we. It may be. We have read in the gospel of John about many chief rulers

who believed on Jesus, "but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praises of men more than the praise of God." That kind of men is not yet extinct; but they are eloquent witnesses, though not meaning it, to the superior excellence of Eclectic Medicine. "Forbid them not."

With those who differ from us we have little controversy. What useful knowledge they possess is for our benefit as much as for their own; and we cannot exclude them from knowing what we have learned, and acting accordingly. We are not engaged in a war of mere propagandism: Our platform is that of broad humanity, including everything true and good. Our principles are as catholic as those of the mighty angel flying through the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach to all that dwell upon the earth. We may not be able, like Jesus, to rebuke demons with a word, like Apollonius to heal disease by a touch, but we are doing a godlike work in banishing the lancet and the poisonous mineral from medical practice, and substituting in their place a system of innocuous medication. We are enlarging our numbers and the field of our labor. A few years ago we were feeble, without influence except among the poor and lowly; but now we hold honorable rank and place in the medical profession. Our history is analogous to that of the patriarch who said: "With my staff alone I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." We hold the arbitration of our own destiny as a School of Medicine. The Future is ours. We have, in short, but to make good our position before the world. We want more general information, more erudition, among our practitioners. Petty jealousies and domineering purposes should be laid aside, and honorable emulation with generous intention should pervade our ranks. We must deserve, if we would obtain, confidence. We cannot get along with narrow-minded half-educated physicians. We must be wisely liberal with our means and efforts. We must cultivate in ourselves that ken, that power of perceiving, which is akin to divine inspiration. We must cleanse our motives from the taint of selfishness. "A good intellect is the chorus of divinity." Let our faith be deep and loyal in what is good and true; our eagerness for knowledge, earnest and insatiable; and our purpose, full of resolve and persistency. Then will we be able to assert the superiority of our Eclecticism; then will we establish our right to the front rank of the healing profession; then will we realize the full ideal of the physician—priest of Nature and her interpreter to mankind.

